

Good morning.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address this issue. I am sorry I cannot personally attend as I am undergoing cancer treatments.

This letter is my plea to you to get this very important bill passed. I have a young daughter who suffered injury due to inadequate regulations at a "non-daycare" facility. This injury could have easily been avoided with proper staffing, training, and the setting of age limits of the children.

When my daughter was eighteen months old, I joined a health club, which I chose because of the availability of on sight childcare. I thought this was a great way for my daughter to socialize with other children. When I brought my daughter to the day care facility, I observed that many times the outside door was left open, which was just a few feet away from a main road. I had to ask each time that the door be closed. When I dropped my child off, there was usually one young girl working in the facility and she was responsible for watching my child along with many others. My growing concerns about the safety came to a head when I picked my daughter up and observed the one girl in charge talking on her cell phone outside of the building with her back to the children. I then saw a toddler crawl outside unnoticed while the other children, including my daughter, were left alone inside the facility. I brought this to the attention of the manager, who reviewed the videotape of the incident, apologized to me, and set a different policy within their facility. I canceled my membership.

A few months later when my daughter was 22 months old, I decided to try a different health club facility and take a tour. They asked me to leave my daughter in the childcare area to see if she liked it. I told them what had happened at another facility and that her safety was the most important thing to me. I toured the facility for 15 minutes while my child stayed the child care area. When I returned from the tour, my child was brought out to me crying and the girl watching the children said she thought my daughter needed a diaper change. I immediately noticed her neck and face was bleeding. My husband and I took her to the emergency room and the police were called. In the police report, the 19 year old worker stated that she left my daughter alone in the Kids Club with another older boy while she signed a third child in. Within those few minutes when my daughter

was left unattended, she was abused by the other child, leaving scratches on her face and neck and bruises on her head and arm. No one was watching, so no one knows exactly what happened. The manager never even inquired as to what had happened, even though he saw my child bleeding. The potential for what could have happened even those brief moments is an even scarier thought.

Since these unfortunate incidents happened at two different facilities, I can only imagine what is happening at similar childcare areas around Connecticut. As a loving mother I never would have left my baby in the hands of unqualified workers. Never did I think my child would be left alone and never did I think my child would be abused. I am not alone in this. These health clubs do not fully explain to parents that they are not licensed daycares, and until an unfortunate incident happens, parents just do not know they are leaving their children in unregulated facilities. Babies cannot defend themselves; that is why I am speaking up to have them removed from the equation and eliminate potential heartache to parents of very young children.

I am asking you as the legislative body to pass this bill so that in the future no mother or father will have to suffer the anguish of having their child injured because there was no law in place to protect them. I am speaking on behalf of my daughter and all young children and ask that you require these child care facilities to be accountable for their hiring practices, staffing, and their procedures for a safer child care environment. The scar on my daughter's face reminds me daily that I never want to see anything like this happen to her or anyone again.

This bill is a big step in the right direction to protect our young children. I realize that the implementation of this bill takes time and money, but how can you put a price tag on our children's safety?

Karen Mowad,
Concerned Parent

